

invention. Specifically, Claim 1 has been amended to recite an acoustic imaging system comprising, inter alia, an image processing system coupled to a transducer and configured to provide a plurality of individualized excitation signals each being delayed by a predetermined delay with respect to each other to control respective transducer elements of the plurality of transducer elements for controlling the transmit aperture of the acoustic imaging system over time such that the two-dimensional transducer element matrix array generates and transmits acoustic energy through the protective cover over time such that acoustic energy transmitted through the protective cover is electronically focused.

(Emphasis added)

Claims 18 has been amended to recite a method for acoustically imaging a patient, comprising at least the steps of: generating a plurality of time delayed transmit signals each for separately controlling a respective transducer element of the two-dimensional transducer element matrix array to electronically focus acoustic transmit waves that traverse the protective cover; and receiving a plurality of time delayed response echoes at the separately controllable individual transducer elements of the two-dimensional transducer element matrix array to electronically focus acoustic receive echoes that traverse the protective cover. (Emphasis added)

The cited references do not disclose or suggest the newly added limitations to Claims 1 and 18 as recited above. Further, the cited references do not disclose or suggest receiving a plurality of time delayed response echoes at separately controllable individual transducer elements of a two-dimensional transducer element matrix array to electronically focus acoustic receive echoes, as recited by Applicant's Claim 18. Hence,

withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) and allowance of Claims 1 and 18 are respectfully requested.

Claims 4, 6-15, 19 and 21 depend from Claims 1 and 18, and therefore include the limitations of Claims 1 and 18. Accordingly, for the same reasons given for Claims 1 and 18, Claims 4, 6-15, 19 and 21 are believed to be patentable over the cited references. Hence, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) and allowance of Claims 4, 6-15, 19 and 21 are respectfully requested.

III. Rejection of Claims 2, 5, 16, 17, 20 and 22

Claims 2, 5, 16, 17, 20 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Shimazaki et al. or Kobayashi et al.

Claims 16 and 17 have been canceled. Claims 2, 5, 20 and 22 depend from Claims 1 and 18, and therefore include the limitations of Claims 1 and 18. Accordingly, for the same reasons given for Claims 1 and 18, Claims 2, 5, 20 and 22 are believed to be patentable over Shimazaki et al. or Kobayashi et al. Hence, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) and allowance of Claims 2, 5, 20 and 22 are respectfully requested.

IV. Rejection of Claim 3

Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Shimazaki et al. or Kobayashi et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,103,129 issued to Slayton et al. on April 7, 1992 (“Slayton et al.”) or U.S. Patent No. 5,922,962 issued to Ishrak et al. on July 13, 1999 (“Ishrak et al.”).

Claim 3 depends from Claim 1, and therefore include the limitations of Claim 1. Accordingly, for the same reasons given for Claim 1, Claim 3 is believed to be patentable

over Shimazaki et al. or Kobayashi et al. in view of Slayton et al. or Ishrak et al. Hence, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) and allowance of Claim 3 is respectfully requested.

V. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all claims presently pending in the application namely, Claims 1-15 and 18-22, are believed to be in condition for allowance and patentably distinguishable over the art of record.

If the Examiner should have any questions concerning this communication or feels that an interview would be helpful, the Examiner is requested to call John Vodopia, Esq., Intellectual Property Counsel, Philips Electronics North America, at 914-333-9627.

Respectfully submitted,



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